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LETTER DATED 26 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit the text of an aide-mémoire issued by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the developments in the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium following the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium on 15 January 1998 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be published as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Aide-mémoire issued on 25 February 1998 by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia

Following the termination of the UNTAES mandate on 15 January 1998, worrisome negative developments continue to take place in the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium leading to an exodus of Serbs on an ever larger scale and jeopardizing the results of that United Nations mission.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has shown no readiness to fully comply with the Basic (Erdut) Agreement which provides for and guarantees the Serbs lasting rights, as well as the commitments it has undertaken in its Letter of Intent of 13 January 1997. Instead, the Serbs continue to be subject to various forms of discrimination, pressure, intimidation, anti-Serb media campaigns, summary dismissals and the denial of property, educational, cultural and other rights, which causes inequality and uncertainty and leads the Serbs to leave the region in a greater number. In the last 40 days alone 5 000 Serbs left the region for the FR of Yugoslavia, Republika Srpska, Norway, United Kingdom and Canada. The exodus of the Serbs under pressure continues unabated and may soon turn into ethnic cleansing invalidating the concept of the multiethnic nature of the region.

The following incidents exemplify the negative developments in the region:

- **Threats and intimidation:** 175 instances of threats to, physical maltreatment and killing of, Serbs have been reported since 15 January 1998;

- Ruzica Sakic, aged 69, was killed at Sarengrad near Ilok, and two Serbs died in a grenade attack in Beli Manastir;

- Srdjan Kovacevic, a Serb from Vukovar, disappeared on 27 January 1998;

- Riding on 8 buses, 8 vans and 81 automobiles, members of the Croatian Party of Right, headed by their leader Ante Djapic, staged a provocative demonstration in Vukovar and Borovo Selo on 14 February 1998, openly threatening the Serbs and demanding their expulsion. 800 of them held a rally at Borovo Naselje, singing fascist Ustasha songs, making fascist catcalls and salutes, as well as public threats to expel and liquidate all Serbs in the region. No measures were taken by the authorities;

- **Ethnic cleansing:** Contrary to the Erdut Agreement, the Serbs are evicted from their homes, which is evidenced by the eviction of the following families:

Milan Bekic, Miroslav Buncic, Radovan Rakas, Marija Vujcic, Zoran Katic, Stojan Devic, Mileva Vukasinovic and Djura Gljivica from Beli Manastir; Radmila Berta and Nikola Malinkovic from Bilje; Bosiljka Milakovic and Smiljana Spasojevic from Ceminac; Tomislav Ivkovic from Darda; Nikola Jorgic from Dubosevci; Milan Bjelajac and Milka Bjelajac from Grabovac; Mladen Djuric from Karanac; Branko Brujic from Petrovac; Milan Bosnjak from Secerana; Djura

Copic and Jovan Gajic from Sumarina; and Branko Basta from Vardarac. According to reliable data, 22 Serbian families with 145 family members were evicted from their homes between 5 and 14 February 1998;

- **Discrimination:** On 22 January 1998, the Government of Croatia adopted the Decree on Leasing Apartments in the Podunavlje owned by the Republic of Croatia which entered into force on 27 January 1998. Although in direct contravention of the Erdut Agreement, the Decree was repealed on 12 February 1998 only under strong international pressure. The Decree provided for the return of apartments to persons (Croats) who acquired the tenancy right prior to 31 March 1998 whereas the tenants (Serbs) were ordered to move out. Before it was repealed, the Decree accounted for the exodus of 5 000 Serbs from the region.

Although the Decree has been repealed, the Law preventing the Serbs from returning to apartments to which they acquired tenancy rights prior to 1991 remains in force. And this was not an isolated case that a discriminatory decision leading to the exodus of Serbs was adopted and then repealed or amended only after negative effects had already been produced.

The Republic of Croatia has brought a Law on Convalidation, yet no accompanying executive acts to enable its implementation have been adopted;

- **Dismissals:** According to as yet incomplete data, about 400 Serbs have been dismissed from the local administration alone. Pressure was put on them to state in writing that they would not seek re-instatement in six months. Further dismissals from public institutions and companies are pending as, as it is claimed, about 30 000 employees are redundant. The redundant workers are Serbs alone;

- **Cultural and educational autonomy:** There is no progress in the implementation of the agreements on cultural and educational autonomy (para. 8 of the Letter of Intent of the Croatian Government). The Department of the Faculty of Agriculture at Darda has been closed down, while no approval (and financial support) has been granted to the Department of the Pedagogical Academy in Vukovar. The Academy prepares Serbian language teachers, so that withholding approval and material support threatens Serbian language instruction in schools.

Croatia has not as yet determined the status and established the method of funding of the Joint Council of Municipalities despite explicit provisions of the Erdut Agreement (para. 12);

- **Amnesty:** The Amnesty Law is not implemented. Instead, new indictments for alleged war crimes are brought ever more frequently and the court in Bjelovar alone initiated proceedings against 43 Serbs and Montenegrins, indicting them for war crimes, despite the promises of Croatia that no new indictments will be made without agreement by the International Tribunal in The Hague;

- **Refugees:** Refugees from Krajina and Western Slavonia who, as Croatian citizens, found refuge in Eastern Slavonia are discriminated against, despite the guarantees of the Erdut Agreement (para. 7) that all residents of the region shall be

equal. These refugees are expelled, even though they have not been provided alternative accommodation and living conditions in other parts of Croatia; and

- **Exodus of the Serbs:** Such policy of the Croatian authorities has accounted for the decrease in the number of Serbs who now live in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. From 128 000 Serbs who lived in this region in 1997, the number has dropped to about 70 000 and is still decreasing.